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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: ATTORNEY GENERAL ASHCROFT'S DECEMBER 14 VISIT TO PRAGUE

-- SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED. PROTECT ACCORDINGLY --

1. (SBU) SUMMARY. Attorney General Ashcroft met separately with the Czech Ministers of the Interior and Justice in Prague, December 14, 2004. The Attorney General thanked the Czechs for their contributions in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as for their cooperation with U.S. law enforcement agencies such as the FBI and the DEA. Both sides agreed that the existing bilateral extradition treaty is outdated and needs to be replaced. The Attorney General explained that an updated bilateral protocol to the US-EU extradition agreement would have to be negotiated in the future. Justice Minister Nemec asked the US to reconsider its visa policy. The Attorney General said he would share this with Secretary Powell in a meeting the following week. END SUMMARY.

INTERIOR: GOODWILL, COOPERATION, AND A PERSONAL REQUEST

2. (SBU) The Attorney General's meeting with Interior Minister Frantisek Bublan was characterized by gratitude on both sides for the level of successful and necessary cooperation between US and Czech law enforcement agencies, particularly the FBI and the DEA. The one problem that was raised was the outdated bilateral extradition treaty, which, both agreed, needed to be replaced. The Attorney General explained that he was in Europe to sign recently negotiated MLATs and extradition treaties with six of the 15 "old" members of the EU, and added that, while the US is negotiating with the EU-15 before doing the same with the countries that acceded this May, he was confident that some day there would be a similar signing with the Czech Republic. Minister Bublan said he would like to learn from the instruments the AG is signing as it is likely that the future agreement with the Czech Republic would be along similar lines.

3. (SBU) Minister Bublan closed the meeting with a personal request for the US government to help transport 2 armored vehicles to Baghdad, where they would be used by a security detail at the Czech Embassy in Iraq. This request has already been passed through Embassy Prague's Defense Attache Office to Washington and EUCOM.

JUSTICE: A FRANKER EXCHANGE ON EXTRADITION OF NATIONALS AND VISAS

4. (SBU) The Attorney general's meeting with Justice Minister and Deputy PM Pavel Nemec also began with his expressions of gratitude for the Czech's demonstrated commitment to the rule of law, and for their contributions in the fight against terrorism. He specifically expressed his thanks for keeping the Czech military policemen in Iraq until after next month's elections. The AG also explained that the purpose of his trip was to sign recently concluded MLATs and extradition treaties with several EU states. He added that the US has been working since 1997 on an updated extradition treaty with the Czech Republic and that he was "eager to move forward on this." The AG explained that the other EU states had, with regard to the question of extradition of nationals, taken what he referred to as "a mature position," and said he hoped that the Czech Republic would see that it is in their interest to have an updated treaty.

5. (SBU) Minister Nemec responded that he was also grateful for the existing level of cooperation on law enforcement. With regard to Iraq, he said, "It was appropriate for a member of the alliance to act as we did." Addressing the issue of extradition of nationals, Nemec explained that this is a politically sensitive point. He argued that the prevailing interpretation of the constitution, at least among the lawmakers he knows, is that the Czech constitution does not allow it.

6. (SBU) Finally, on the touchy subject of US visas for Czech citizens, the AG said the US Government sees the Czech Republic as a nation of growing economic prosperity and international influence. He said he knows President Bush favors easy access for legitimate travelers, especially those from friendly nations, and pointed out that a bilateral working group is trying to improve the application procedure

for Czechs wanting to travel to the US. Nemec responded by asking the US to reconsider its visa policy. He said this is a "very sensitive problem," and explained that while, on the one hand, the US and the Czech Republic have great relations, on the other hand, Czechs feel discriminated against since citizens of many other EU states don't need visas to visit the US. The AG promised to "communicate your concerns" to the Secretary of State in a meeting the following week.

17. (U) Participants:

U.S.

Attorney General Ashcroft
Ambassador William Cabaniss
Bruce Swartz, Deputy AG
David Ayres, Chief of Staff, AG
Mark Corallo, DOJ Public Affairs Director
David Israelite, Deputy Chief of Staff, AG
Jeffrey Taylor, Counselor to AG

Czech Ministry of Interior
Minister Frantisek Bublan
Jaroslav Machane, Deputy Police President for Criminal Law
Michal Mazel, Director, Security Policy Department
Blanka Rybonova, Director, Section for Intl. Cooperation and EU Integration
Olga Dvorakova, Section for Intl. Cooperation and EU Integration
Czech Ministry of Justice
Minister Pavel Nemec
Vladimir Kral, Deputy Minister
Roman Polasek, Deputy Minister
Jindrich Babicky, Director, International Department
Petr Dimun, Press Spokesperson

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